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German Science Advisory Board Says MON810 Ban Scientifically Unjustified

Report Categories:

Biotechnology

Approved By:

Bobby Richey, Jr.

Prepared By:

Dietmar Achilles

Report Highlights:

The scientific advisory board to the German Federal Ministry of Agriculture has publically announced that MON810 corn varieties do not pose "any risk to the environment" and that the planting and marketing ban announced in April 2009 is scientifically unjustified.

General Information:

The scientific advisory board to the German Federal Ministry of Agriculture has publically announced that MON810 corn varieties do not pose "any risk to the environment." In follow-up to the cultivation ban for MON810 corn varieties imposed by Minister Aigner in April 2009, the Central Committee for Biological Safety, Zentrale Kommission fuer Biologische Sicherheit - ZKBS, reviewed on their own initiative the scientific studies presented to support the ban. ZKBS came to the conclusion that none of these studies provide sufficient evidence to support a cultivation ban. ZKBS determined that several of the studies even show

significant methodical weaknesses or grave flaws. In its final report of July 7, 2009, ZKBS agreed with the French researcher Group Riccroch et al. and with EFSA that the ban is not scientifically supported. With this recent review ZKBS also confirmed its evaluation of 2007 when this group of scientists had voluntarily evaluated risk studies concerning MON810.

ZKBS is a group of twelve scientists appointed by the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection for a period of three years. Based on articles 4 and 5 of the German Gentech Law, ZKBS is administered by the BVL - Federal office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety. ZKBS evaluates genetically engineered organisms for their potential impact on humans, animals and the environment. ZKBS also advises BVL about the safety of any applied field release and application of a new biotech event. ZKBS recommendations are not binding for political decisions. Also the German Federal Ministry is not committed to call for ZKBS advice prior to political decisions.

The ZKBS evaluation of the studies concerning MON810 did not receive any attention in German media nor at the political level. Sources characterize ZKBS findings as only of an advisory nature for political decisions and that ZKBS was not consulted prior to the original decision of Minsiter Aigner.

It is unclear what role this evaluation might play in any attempt to revisit the planting ban in the future.